

e-Bugle

Garrett Bugle Internet Edition

Volume 58

March 2011

No. 3



Calendar

Fri., Feb. 25	Pick up your <i>Bugle</i> at Penn Place	Sat., Mar. 12	Energy advice, GP CAN, Post Office lobby, 10 am to noon (p 3)
Sat., Feb. 26	Silent Auction fundraiser for WJ Crew, Town Hall, 6–9:30 pm (see p 7)	Sun., Mar. 13	Daylight Savings Time begins; reset clocks
Sun., Feb. 27	Slideshow, “The Making of ‘Wildlife in Garrett Park,’” Town Hall, 4 pm (see p 6)	Mon., Mar. 14	Town Council Mtg., Town Hall, 7:30 pm
Thurs., Mar. 3	Community meeting on Pepco reliability, Town Hall, 7:30 pm, (see p 8) (no Jam Session)	Tues., Mar. 15	<i>Bugle</i> deadline, 4 pm
Sat., Mar. 5	GIVES collection, Penn Place, 9 am–1 pm	Thurs., Mar. 17	Jam Session, Town Hall, 8 pm; Happy St. Pat’s Day
Mon., Mar. 7	Weekly yard waste collection begins; new Penn Place exhibit, Martha Seigel (see p 5)	Wed., Mar. 23	Citizens Assoc. Mtg., Town Hall, 8 pm: Nominations for Town Council Election
Tues., Mar. 8	Lunch Bunch, Town Hall, 12:30 pm (see p 7)	Thurs., Mar. 24	Not for Seniors Only Games and Tea, Town Hall, 1:30–3:30 pm
Fri., Mar. 11	Film Society, <i>The Full Monty</i> , Town Hall; dinner 7:15 pm, movie 8 pm (see p 5)	Fri., Mar. 25	Pick up your <i>Bugle</i> at Penn Place
		Sun., Mar. 27	Archives presentation: Looking Back at Early <i>Bugles</i> , Town Hall, 2 pm (see p 4)

Sky Bridges and Stilts

A temporarily all-male Town Council (Beth Irons was under the weather) presided over an unusually crowded and action-packed meeting this month. Outside the Town Hall, the *Wuthering Heights* night—white clouds, velvet sky, bright moon, and the high black branches of our famous trees—had its own drama.

And about those trees: Many people attended this meeting in order to honor Susan Alexander for what the Mayor called her “very major work in this town” on behalf of the preservation of our canopy. March 9, 2011, is Susan Alexander Day, he announced, to applause; her friends will be presenting the town with a bench in her honor.

The town outdid itself in presentations by residents: One after another, citizens took to the microphone to address the Council. Alex Levy, speaking for a group of Argyle residents, asked the town to handle the Argyle sledding hill somewhat differently, in the name of safety. In particular, they’d like the hill to be plowed four or five

days after a snowfall ends. They’d also like better barricades and signage.

Jennifer Sass proposed that the town take part in the EPA’s Green Power Community Challenge, in which communities get as much power from renewable sources as possible. Jennifer would represent the town in this endeavor, but to do that she needs permission from the Town Council. (There’s not too much competition from other towns yet, so if we act fast we stand to win amazing prizes.)

Roman Miles, until recently a renter in Garrett Park, asked the town to do something about its lack of landlord/tenant rules and regulations. “My landlord did not care about his house,” he said, and went on to describe having to tolerate serious neglect of the property. The Mayor explained that “the town exempted itself years ago from those codes.” It can’t exempt itself from health and safety codes, however, and this would

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certainly be one avenue of complaint; but because we've been unable to do much about egregious instances like this one, the Mayor suggested that it might be time for us to revisit our exemption.

An application for a demolition permit on a garage on 4706 Waverly was granted.

Councilmember Jack Mandel then spoke about the possibility of Garrett Park setting up a charitable foundation—the Garrett Park Foundation?—as a kind of pass-through for donations people might want to make to any number of town charities. Extended discussion of the nature of this proposed foundation ensued, with people worried about compromising the independence of certain established charities (the Betsy White Fund, for instance) if they are placed under a larger organization.

Councilmember Phil Schulp updated us on the search for a new county school superintendent (a search firm has been hired), and on the recent rejection of what sounds like a pretty wild proposal to add some classroom space to Garrett Park Elementary via the construction of “sky bridges and stilts.”

Margaret Soltan

Women’s Club Events

Mark your calendars for these events sponsored by the Women’s Club:

- Saturday, April 30—Plant Swap
- Saturday, May 21—Annual Progressive Dinner
- Sunday, June 5—Annual Musicale (fundraiser for music scholarship)
- June—New event! First annual Youth Artists Show (more info will be forthcoming)
- Sunday, July 3—Pooch Parade
- Saturday, October 8—Attic in the Street
- Friday, December 9—Holiday Sing-Along (co-sponsored with GP musicians)
- Saturday, December 10—Santa comes to Town Hall!
- Sunday, December 18—Holiday decorating contest

And remember, if you want to know more about the Women’s Club (and especially if you are a newcomer to Garrett Park), contact president Valerie Gottron or vice-president Lillian Del Priore. Look for news of our activities in the *Bugle* or on the listserv. And if you would like a Garrett Park t-shirt (attractive dark green with a tree design), these are available for \$10 from Elizabeth Henley in the Town Office.

Visit Garrett Park’s Web site:
www.garrettpark-md.gov

Participate in the Musicale!

The annual Garrett Park musicale raises funds for a music scholarship for a 5th grade student at Garrett Park Elementary School. The late Ilah Gieser of Garrett Park, in a gesture of generosity, conceived the idea of an annual \$1,000 scholarship to fund a year’s private lessons for a worthy young musician in the local community. To raise money for the scholarship, we hold a musicale every spring to showcase a rich variety of vocal and instrumental talent.

The next musicale in support of the scholarship will be held on Sunday, June 5. If you’d like to play or sing on the program, please contact Sue Petito. We showcase all accomplishments! Interested in singing in a small chorus? The Town Singers always welcome new and returning voices. It’s gobs of fun and supports the next generation of music-makers. Come join us!

Donations Still Needed

As was reported in last month’s *Bugle*, much progress has been made toward the preservation of the Garrett Park Community Center. The deed has been transferred to the town, and the town has issued a lease to the Garrett Park Nursery School. The nursery school has raised over \$239,000 in cash and pledges, as well as approximately \$50,000 of in-kind commitments of labor and materials.

However, the total cost of the project will be over \$330,000. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation toward the renovation of the Garrett Park Community Center. All donations over \$250 will be recognized with permanent displays inside the building. However, *all* donations of *any* amount are greatly appreciated and will be recognized with bookplates in our renovated library. Please also contact us if you have any ideas for donations of labor and materials toward the project.

Checks can be sent to GPNS, PO Box 314, Garrett Park, MD 20896. Please write “SOS” in the memo field. Contact Alison Pearce with any questions.

The *Garrett Bugle* is a publication of the Citizens Association of Garrett Park, published 10 times a year. Publication of the *Bugle* is supported by member dues. All residents of Garrett Park are members of the Citizens Association. Yearly dues (\$20 per family or \$10 per individual per address) can be sent to Citizens Association, Box 456, Garrett Park, MD 20896.

Citizens Association Officers:
President: Mario Grande (mfgrande@aol.com)
Vice-President: Todd Harris
Treasurer: Lara Hines
Secretary: Leslie Bethke-Pope

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First-class subscriptions cost \$15 (bulk mail subscriptions are no longer available). Letters to the editor can be submitted by mail or hand to *Bugle* staff or by e-mail through the town Web site: www.garrettpark-md.gov/submit-BugleArticle.php. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for length and clarity. Unsigned letters will not be printed.

Town Administrator Notes

Town Budget: The Council will be working on the FY 2012 budget (July 2011 through June 2012), which will be introduced at the regular monthly meeting on March 14. If any residents have comments or suggestions regarding next fiscal year's budget, they should contact the Mayor, a Councilmember, or the Town Office.

Yard Waste Collection: Weekly yard waste collection begins on Monday, March 7. Please remember to bundle sticks in lengths of no more than 4 feet, and place clippings, leaves, etc., in paper leaf bags. No plastic bags, please.

Large Item Pickup: The next large item pickup is scheduled for Saturday, April 2.

State Tax Form Reminder: Please remember to write "Garrett Park" in the box labeled "City, town or taxing area" when filling out your state income tax forms. This ensures that our community receives its fair share of the income tax revenues that the state distributes to the 23 counties and 157 incorporated cities and towns throughout Maryland. This revenue supports many of the services the town provides to residents. Also, the Town Office can provide copies of most IRS forms, so stop by if you need any.

Town Elections 2011: Election Day in Garrett Park will be Monday, May 2. Polls are open from 7 am to 7:30 pm in the public lobby of the Post Office at Penn Place. The terms of office for Councilmembers Jack Mandel, Chris Petito, and Phil Schulp are up this year. Candidate nominations will take place during the Citizens Association meeting on Wednesday, March 23, with the Candidates' Forum currently set for Wednesday, April 27. Additional nominations may be made by written petition signed by 10 registered voters and filed with the Town Office by 12 noon on Monday, April 11. Election results will be announced at an Election Day reception in the Town Hall, hopefully by 10 pm. The reception will start at 9 pm.

Voter Registration: The last day to register to vote in this election is Monday, April 2. To be eligible to vote in a town election, you need to be registered with Montgomery County *at your Garrett Park address*, or be on the list of qualified, non-citizen Garrett Park residents.

If you have not voted in the last five years, your name will have been withdrawn from the active file by Montgomery County, and you will need to reregister. You may register at any time by calling the Town Office for the necessary forms (or for address change forms). You may also register at the Town Office during normal office hours. Special registration hours will also be held on Saturday, March 26, and Saturday, April 2, from 8 am until 12 noon at the Town Office. Please call the Town Office with any questions regarding registration, qualification of voters, nominations, etc.

Absentee Ballots: Please note that the Council has changed absentee ballot procedures (see Ord. 2011-01, posted on the town Web site and the PO bulletin board). All absentee ballots must be applied for in writing. Application forms for absentee ballots will be available (for download off the Web site or pickup at the Town Office) by Tuesday, March 15. Absentee ballots will be available Wednesday, April 13, through Election Day and may be mailed to you, or you can come to the Town Office to pick up. Late absentee ballots may be requested after April 28 if you need to have someone else (an agent) obtain a ballot for you.

Ted Pratt, Town Clerk Administrator



Handholding Offered March 12

We know you want to buy green power or sign up for that home energy audit. It is just all so *confusing*, with all the different offers, and rebates, and who has time to research all that stuff anyway? Well, your Garrett Park CAN committee members aren't exactly green experts, but they are willing to take a few hours on a Saturday morning and take the mystery out of some simple steps that will save you energy and help the environment. Join us at the Post Office on Saturday, March 12, from 10 am to noon, and we'll do our best to share our research and help you take the next steps. Bagels included. And, no, we're not promoting emergency generators! If you are interested in signing up for green power, bring a copy of your electric bill, and we'll take you online and walk you through the steps.

Questions? Call Joanne Schmader or Karen Anderson.

Services for Seniors

Activities of Daily Living <ul style="list-style-type: none">BathingLiftingPersonal Care & HygieneDressingTransferring	What Makes ElderCaring Different? <ul style="list-style-type: none">2 hour minimum for services – most companies require 4 hours as a minimumAll caregivers are professionally trained nursing assistantsThe owner of ElderCaring personally meets with you to discuss your needsAll caregivers are fluent in EnglishPersonal choice in selection of every caregiverLicensed, Bonded, Insured24 Hours Service – 7 Days a Week
Support Services <ul style="list-style-type: none">CompanionshipMeal PreparationMedication ReminderPhysical TherapyLight HousekeepingTransportation to Appointments	

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Citizens Association News

At the March 24 meeting, the Citizens Association will accept nominations for the upcoming town elections on May 2. Three Town Council seats are up for election this year; please consider running for one of these important positions. If interested, please have someone submit your nomination at this meeting.

Do you have a suggestion or idea for a topic for future Citizens Association Meetings that you feel would be of interest to the town? If so, please forward your thoughts to Mario Grande at mfgrande@aol.com or send a note to PO Box 456.

Town Dinner. True to the “Hard Times” theme, the Town Dinner (January 29) was held during another snowstorm that left residents of GP without power for anywhere from 2 to 5 days. The evening was a huge success, filled with lots of laughter, good cheer, and wonderful food. The evening started with Chris Strong leading everyone in a moment of silence to honor those that lived during the depression and pay tribute to the hard times they endured.

Residents told stories of hard times they had experienced and how they overcame them. Stories ranged in severity and humor. Tales of financial woe included lugging large auto parts to the garage on the NY subway because a tow truck was too expensive and drinking cheap beer because it was less expensive than soda. Other stories involved the heart, including suffering layovers at the Houston airport en route to see a long-distance girlfriend. On the home front, others shared stories of how the inconveniences of the power failure created opportunities to spend quality time together and turned a bad situation into a cherished family bonding experience.

The 2011 Citizens Association officers were nominated by Chris Strong and confirmed by the town residents. Although he will remain on the CA, Chris Strong announced that he would not be President in 2011. We would like to thank Chris for his years of leadership and his incredible contribution to GP and the CA. The new town officers are Mario Grande, President; Todd Harris, Vice President; Lara Hines, Treasurer; and Leslie Bethke-Pope, Secretary.

Thank you to all the volunteers who made this evening possible!

Annual Dues. The 2011 Citizens Association annual dues are being collected. The annual dues are \$10 for individuals and \$20 per family. These dues cover the costs associated with printing the *Bugle* and putting on all CA events (Town Dinner, July 4, Newcomers’ Reception, Spooky Woods, and Pumpkin Carving). All *Bugle* editing and distribution and time put into the production of town events are on a strictly volunteer basis. We depend on your dues to produce the things that make Garrett Park a fun place to live.

If you did not pay your dues at the Town Dinner, please mail them to the CA, Box 456 in Garrett Park. An envelope was included in the February *Bugle* for your convenience.

Garrett Park Listserv. To join this electronic forum, which allows neighbors to communicate information about town concerns, safety issues, upcoming events, and recommended services, e-mail Todd Harris or sign in at groups.yahoo.com/group/GarrettParkneighbors/join.

Questions or comments for the Citizens Association? If so, please send a note to P.O. Box 456 or e-mail Mario Grande (mfgrande@aol.com).

Archives Presentation

Come to the Town Hall on Sunday, March 27 at 2 pm for the last in a series of three programs based on material from the Garrett Park Archives. For the first, on January 23, the theme was “The Depression Era in GP.” In that program, one old-time Garrett Parker was quoted as saying, “Ah, we’re always upset about everything.” As if to prove him right, the second program, on February 20, looked at a more recent time of agitation: “Garrett Park as a Nuclear-Free Zone.” The well-attended program covered some of the ways Garrett Park’s ordinance influenced the wider world.

For the last program, the theme is “Looking Back at Early *Bugles*.” This should provide another opportunity to hear about things that were exercising the town in the past.

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Art at Penn Place

Martha Seigel’s watercolor abstractions will be on display at the Penn Place Gallery beginning March 7. Martha says, “When I moved to Garrett Park in 1965, the friendliness and independent spirit of the community made me feel immediately at home, for I grew up in a small New England town.” Balancing family responsibilities with art studies, she obtained her master’s degree in painting at the American University in 1980. Then her dear friend and neighbor, Ilah Gieser, persuaded her to start an art class for adults. What started out as a small class of five students sitting around her kitchen table blossomed into a lifelong career. One of Martha’s loyal students said, “The artistic environment of Martha’s quaint old house, the fragrant mugs of tea, and, most of all, her warm words of encouragement, make Martha’s classes a truly unique experience.”

In 1983 Martha rang the Garrett Park Town Hall bell, inviting all Garrett Parkers to view her first solo exhibit. “Glimpses of Garrett Park” consisted of 40 paintings done sitting outside in the streets and gardens of the town. Indeed, throughout her career, her favorite subjects have always been what was close at hand and commonplace. “There was no need to search far and wide,” she said, “there was so much I wanted to paint right here in town.”

After many years of painting garden landscapes, still lifes, and interiors of her old house, Martha made a big change in her subject matter. To be more exact, she removed subject matter altogether! She explained, “I decided to no longer paint what I see in front of me, to no longer depict the real world. This move into abstraction, or, to be more accurate, ‘nonrepresentational art,’ is proving to be a wild and exhilarating ride for me. At the same time, it is humbling, for I am acutely aware of how much I have to learn, how much there is to explore. I feel like a beginner. This is OK, however, for, as an artist and a teacher, it is my firm conviction that painting is a creative activity for which there are no rules, and every time I pick up the brush I am a new person, and this is a new beginning.”

Bert Zbar

Garrett Park Film Society

The Full Monty: Will they or won’t they? Join the GPFS on Friday, March 11, to find out! This 1997 British comedy is set in Sheffield, England, where a group of out-of-work steel workers decide to put on a Chippendales-style show in an effort to raise some much needed funds. As they work through their plans, and their complicated lives, you will find yourself charmed and chuckling. We guarantee you will leave the Town Hall with a smile on your face!!

Admission is free to GPFS members and only \$5 per person or \$10 per family for nonmembers. This is the third of nine films in the 2011 series. It is still not too late to join!

Dinner will feature shepherd’s pie (meat and meatless), served with suitable veggies and dessert. Cost for dinner is about \$10 per person. Wine, beer, soda, and nuts/popcorn also are available at prices ranging from \$1 to \$5.

Dinner will begin at 7:15 pm. The movie begins at 8 pm. While most do dinner and the movie, you are welcome to come only for one or the other. As in the film, this is a celebration of community.


Jobs List

Please consult the list below if you need help with any of these tasks. If you would like to offer your own services, please call the Town Office (301-933-7488), which maintains the list.

Remember, even if you don’t keep this list handy, you can always call the town staff either to get a referral or to put yourself on the jobs list.

Please see the list in the printed *Bugle*. It is the *Bugle’s* policy not to include names of minor children, private telephone numbers, or private e-mail addresses in the *e-Bugle*.

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Bugle Notes . . . Sweet and Sour

- ♪ Our condolences to Elin Quigley on the death of her father, Martin Quigley (93) in West Hartford, Connecticut, on February 5. He leaves his wife, Katherine, of 65 years, 9 children, 27 grandchildren, and 6 great grandchildren.
- ♪ The Post Office requests that you return any yellow "there's a package waiting for you" cards that you may have lying around. They are running low!
- ♪ Did you have a chance to go take a peek at the Town Archives when it was open? If there is anyone in town who knows animal bones, there us a big jaw bone with teeth that was found when the pool was being built that the Archives would like identified.
- ♪ In view of the projected enrollment for Garrett Park Elementary School, there is a proposal for four more rooms to be added, somehow, to the new building. Let's hope plans can be made and approved quickly so that the construction that is currently under way will not be held up.
- ♪ Kindergarten Orientation is coming up in May. If you have a child who will be five years old on or before September 1, 2011, please call the school (301-571-6920) to schedule a time for an orientation interview.
- ♪ If you would like to work part-time at GPES as a substitute lunch room/recess aide, call the school for information.
- ♪ Daisy Troop 4964 left charming valentines for the 25 Lunch Bunch eaters on February 8. It was so nice to find handmade greetings to remind them of that special day. Lunch Bunch is not just a time to meet and eat together once a month. The announcements, the debates, and the problem solving go well with dessert!
- ♪ The Mandel family is happy to announce that their son has been accepted to the Culinary Institute of America in New York. So they'll have a CIA man in the family!
- ♪ Four Garrett Park artists (Vickie Baily, Robert LeMar, Martha Seigel, and Jane Salomon) will be featured at the Maplewood Art Gallery at Maplewood Park Place (9707 Old Georgetown Road, Bethesda). The show is to open March 7 and run to June 1. The opening reception for the artists will be on Sunday, March 13, at 4 pm.
- ♪ Did you see the letter to the *Post* on January 22 from former Garrett Parker Stephanie Masakowski Luken? She wrote an appreciative tribute to Sargent Shriver, recalling how he kindly offered her a ride on his daughter's pony when she was 12 years old, and then happily reminisced with her about it 40 years later.

Slideshow: "The Making of 'The Wildlife of Garrett Park'"

If you want to see more of the bird photos from Vickie Baily's photography show, "The Wildlife of Garrett Park," come to her slideshow at 4 pm on Sunday, February 27, at the Town Hall. What were mere 4 x 6 prints at her Penn Place show will now be blown up to fill a whole screen! She will also be showing photographs that weren't part of the earlier show and telling the stories of how and where she found the birds and animals. Because a non-Garrett Parker won the drawing at her Opening Reception, Vickie will also be giving away a free photograph or photographic book, winner's choice.

Vickie says, "This is going to be an informal show where I'm as interested to hear what wildlife everyone else has been seeing (and where!) as to give a show-and-tell of my own." Tales of coyotes, opossum, snakes, and other wildlife are particularly welcome.

Vickie has donated the five bird panels from her Penn Place show to the town, along with one blank panel. This means the town together needs to find and photograph 15 more birds! She believes that besides participating in this effort, "There are many naturalist activities we could take part in as a town." For example, the 2011 Great Backyard Bird Count ran from February 18 to February 21—unfortunately earlier than the

slideshow (or this *Bugle*), but if you're interested in such activities, Vickie suggests you find out more by typing the title into Google.

And if you missed the Penn Place showing of the original exhibit, you can still see it at Anytime Fitness in Kensington, where it will be hanging from February 22. The town has allowed the donated bird panels to go with the rest of the show, so those won't be mounted at Penn Place until the show at Anytime Fitness ends sometime this spring.

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Letter to the Editor

Sidewalk Plea

It is a truth universally acknowledged that sidewalks are built near streets to protect pedestrians of all ages from vehicular traffic. Unfortunately it is also a truth almost as honored in the breach as the observance that living in Garrett Park often includes the obligation to clear your public sidewalks promptly of snow and ice for safety. Residents of Garrett Park may shirk this responsibility from ignorance, infirmity, or indifference. Those who clear their driveways but not their sidewalks clearly demonstrate their lack of concern for their neighbors. It is ironic that impassible sidewalks force pedestrians to walk in the streets when streets are least safe—despite the town's heroic street plowing efforts. It took a boy's death to get a traffic light installed. I hope it doesn't take another tragedy to get residents to clear all sidewalks promptly.

Jim Agenbroad

Silent Auction for WJ Crew

On Saturday evening, February 26, there will be a silent auction from 6 to 9:30 pm in the Town Hall to raise money for the WJ Crew Team. Because the county does not fund crew as a school sport, the team needs to raise money to support itself. Proceeds from the silent auction will be used to purchase boats, oars, and other equipment.

The auction is to be an adult event and include a live raffle, appetizers, desserts, and fun activities (checks and cash only, please). Auction items include a whitewater rafting trip, ski packages, restaurant certificates, sports tickets, jewelry, professional photography portrait session, private dog training package, retail gift cards, and much more. Entrance to the auction is free.

The WJ Crew Club is a nonprofit organization that welcomes all students regardless of rowing experience to join and be part of the team. Visit walterjohnsoncrew.org to see the Auction Catalog and more information about the WJ Crew Club.

Lunch Bunch

All Garrett Park residents are welcome to Lunch Bunch! We were delighted to have to fetch more chairs to accommodate the many residents who came to Lunch Bunch on January 11 and February 8—some we hadn't seen in a long while, as well as newcomers, both seniors and not so senior. Mayor Chris Keller joined us for both dates, and Councilmember Beth Irons attended in January.

At the January lunch, a smorgasbord of hearty fare, including an array of delectable desserts, kept us busy while Officer Dana Stroman spoke about neighborhood safety and distributed 911-only cell phones. At the February lunch, Mayor Keller addressed the January 26 "wintry mix" storm, the subsequent power outages, and Pepco challenges. However, often we schmooze and kibitz the entire time without such special guests, and enjoy the delicious and festive afternoon.

Our community invites all residents to attend. Remember, Lunch Bunch is monthly, meeting on the second Tuesday at 12:30 pm in the Town Hall. Please bring a dish to share, and invite a friend or neighbor. We appreciate a \$1.50 donation per person for the beverages provided. Thanks from the Seniors Committee: Florence Gootenberg, Elizabeth Henley, Ulla Lustig, Rita Pittillo, and Bonnie Tyler.

Green Again

Thank you, Frank Obrimski, for our green banner this month. We are now good for the rest of this printing year. Would anyone like to donate for our next printing year starting in September 2011? Send a check for \$60 made out to the Citizens Association to me, Box 98, and we'll put the money into our bucket. Thank you in advance.

Have you paid your Citizens Association dues? Remember, dues are \$10 per individual or \$20 per family at any one address in town, and the dues help pay for the *Bugle* to come out every month, the 4th of July festivities, the Town Dinner, and other special happenings that go on in town. You can mail them in to Box 456 if you haven't paid already.

Mary Moyer

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Letter from the Mayor

A cold wind is howling as I write this month's letter; yesterday set a record high at 77 degrees; less than a month ago we were without power for several days after an 8-inch snowfall—no one can say that we don't have variety in our weather! The electrical outage imposed considerable hardship, and in its aftermath there was much well-deserved criticism of Pepco. Let's now turn some of the understandable outrage we feel toward the repeated electric outages to more constructive ends. Help secure passage of the Maryland Electricity Service Quality and Reliability Act by contacting our District 17 representatives and other Maryland legislators. Demand greater action and accountability from the one agency that has the ability to secure better service from Pepco, the Maryland Public Service Commission. Help the town collect more information that we can submit to the PSC. (Go to the town Web site, www.garrettpark-md.gov and under Announcements, find the link "Post-storm information/Town request for outage information from residents." That page also has a link to the town's August 2010 testimony to the PSC.)

We heard from lots of justifiably unhappy residents during the outage; however, when the town requested input for a detailed submission to the PSC, we received only one comment. Turn some of your frustration into action by dropping us a line with specific information about your experiences and your suggestions. Do you know of a transformer that fails every time the breeze freshens? Step outside, jot down the Pepco number on the pole that holds the transformer, and send it to us with your observations. How many times over the past year have you had to throw out spoiled food, or move to a hotel for an outage? Quantify those costs and send them to us; if we hear from a significant number of residents, perhaps we can extrapolate losses for the community as a whole. Think about other quantifiable losses and information that we can present; do you telecommute or otherwise work from home? And, perhaps most importantly: did you talk to a crew worker in the field during power restoration efforts? We've found that those folks are knowledgeable, helpful, and often quite candid (in distinct contrast to corporate Pepco representatives). Did you learn information that would be useful to our understanding of Pepco's unacceptable service? We need your input if we are to make a substan-

tive, factual submission to the PSC. E-mail to garrettpark2@comcast.net or direct to me.

Additionally, attend a community meeting on March 3 at Town Hall, 7:30 pm, on the subject of Pepco reliability (or the lack thereof). I expect the meeting, sponsored by County Council member and Garrett Park resident Nancy Floreen for Parkside and Garrett Park residents, to focus on affirmative steps we can take. Eric Friedman, Director of Montgomery County's Office of Consumer Protection, will participate; his office is coordinating the county's Pepco Work Group.

The town election will be upon us sooner than we realize (May 2). Implementing a recommendation made by the Town Judges of Election, the Town Council at its February meeting introduced an ordinance to streamline absentee voting in Garrett Park by making Garrett Park absentee voter qualifications and procedures comparable to state law. Please let us know your views. (On the town Web site under Announcements, find the link "Council introduces two ordinances...")

Other recommendations of the Judges of Election that will be considered and implemented bear more on operating procedures and do not require a change in town ordinances. There is one recommendation in particular that would benefit from discussion by residents: the Judges propose that the town move its polling place from the Post Office lobby at Penn Place to the Town Hall, as was done while Penn Place was being renovated. The suggestion has much to recommend it: the Judges rightly cite "crowding, noise, and other distractions" as the rationale for their recommendation; the Town Hall would provide a calmer environment for voting. On the other hand, there is a strong tradition of voting at the Post Office and an assumption that more people will cast votes if it can be done in conjunction with picking up their mail. Also, parking near the Town Hall this year may be affected by construction traffic as the rebuilding of Garrett Park Elementary School will be in full swing. Clearly, there are logical arguments either way; we would value resident views as we consider this recommendation of the Judges. Please let us hear from you.

The wind is picking up... better sign off before I lose power! Best wishes for an early and calm spring.

Chris Keller